

Question #3

The Effect of Past Events on the Actions, Attitudes or Values of a Character

Sample C

In "The Great Gatsby", Jay Gatsby falls in love with a girl named Daisy while he is in the army and the rest of his actions in the novel are motivated solely by his desire to obtain her. Throughout the novel Gatsby does many things in order to gain the love of Daisy which eventually lead to his death. Gatsby's love of Daisy in the past which leads to his later obsession contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole by emphasizing the novel's theme that money cannot buy happiness.

When Gatsby is first introduced in the Novel, he is an extremely wealthy man. It is later revealed in the novel that Gatsby was once poor and gained his wealth through illegitimate business practices. His sole motivation to gain so much wealth was to permanently win the love of Daisy, who he had a short relationship with while he was poor and in the army.

Gatsby does many things throughout the novel in an attempt to get Daisy to leave her husband to be with him. He throws lavish parties, spends time with Daisy, shows off his wealth, but those things are enough to get Daisy her husband. Gatsby's own death is eventually caused by his obsession when he allows Daisy to drive his car. Daisy hits and kills a woman while driving, and Gatsby hides the car and tells no one in order to protect her. The dead woman's husband eventually finds out that Gatsby was the owner of the car and then precedes to go to his house and shoot him.

The novel's theme that money can't buy happiness is shown by Gatsby's inability to let the past go. Gatsby tries to win back the love of Daisy through money, but ends up becoming even more unhappy and eventually in a way causes his own death, although not directly. If Gatsby had been able let go of the past, he wouldn't have destroyed his own life.

Sample S

In Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Victor Frankenstein made many choices that were far from wise. As a result of his actions, his dreams were crushed and his life eventually taken from him. His creation, deemed a monster by the ideals of society, was left without a source of guidance or comfort, and therefore became forever fixated upon his beginning.

While Victor Frankenstein may be seen as the main character of the novel, his creation is truly the fuel for action and motion throughout the work. Because he is spurned by society due to his appearance, he has little hope for a future other than solitude and separation. He is therefore forced to dwell on his past; Victor and his abandonment.

Although his existence is wretched, the monster in actuality has quite a benevolent nature. The first part of his life he hopes for redemption, and believes he can achieve it. His memory of Victor fuels the need and want of a family.

However, most of the action in the novel is caused by the monster's rage. He is forced to re-live his initial abandonment by the rejection of the family he watches, and Victor's constant spurning of him. He begins to haunt Victor, much like the memory of his maker has been haunting him for the entirety of his existence. But unlike a memory, the monster can do physical harm. His hatred of Victor manifest itself in the murder of Victor's most dearly loved ones. Victor's younger brother, one of the servants, Clerval, Elizabeth, and several other characters, some not related to Victor, all as a result of the monster's actions. His inability to get over his troubled past causes Victor's life and his own, to become full of misery and destruction.

Had Victor not abandoned him, or the family he watched taken him in, perhaps the monster would have behaved differently, but as it stands, he is one of the most dynamic characters in the novel. Not only does he cause the movement in the plot, but he also undergoes many changes himself. His tie to Victor seems unbreakable, and it is so, but his reaction to it shifts all throughout the novel. In the close of the novel, there is a chance for reconciliation, but due to Victor's untimely death, it is impossible. However, the death of Victor, and what had been the driving reason of his life, caused him to break free from the cycle, and instead of murdering others, he did so to himself.

The monster's strong tie to his troubling past essentially is the novel. All of the action spawns from this source, whether being carried out by the monster or Victor's reaction to the monster. The past is the force that causes change in both characters, and without it, the meaning of the work as a whole would be irreconcilably altered.

Sample Y

In Heart of Darkness the protagonist. Marlow had an obsession with maps as a child which fueled him to want to go to the African Congo. This is his quest for self-knowledge and experience in itself.

Sample Z

Many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. "The Scarlet Letter" is a good example of each.

In "The Scarlet Letter," Hester commits adultery therefore, is penalized by having to wear the scarlet letter "A" for as long as she lives. After having a daughter, she also gets discriminated and looked down upon due to her mother's past actions.

At the begin Hester's crime affected her negatively because she suffered everyday having people talk about her and ruining her reputation which also made it hard for her to get a job because nobody wanted her to sew their clothes.

After a couple of years that negative affect turned into a positive to. Hester no longer looked at that scarlet letter "A" as a bad thing, it became her motivation to do better and her motivation to protect her daughter and to give her a good life. As a result, the value of that scarlet letter "A" also changed. It was no longer putting her down, it was actually what was lifting her spirits up.

The changes didn't only show in her own personal life but it also changed in the society that she lived in. People were beginning to see Hester as a human being again. When nobody was giving her any respect, she respected herself. She valued herself and her daughter. Also the secret of her daughter's father. Hester refused to give the name of the man she committed adultery with, also the man she loved.

Hester's relationship to the past helped her become a better person in the end. Even though she committed adultery, she grew from the mistakes she made.

In conclusions, I liked this book as whole. The techniques that this author used made it a very good book.

Sample H

The past can help define who a person is. Events in the past influence choices and future events to the point of by habit. The marks left by a past life are permanent and can greatly determine what path a person will take in the future.

In The Time Traveler's Wife, by Audrey Niffenegger, Henry is greatly influenced by his past. His is his future with his ability to time travel and with this ability he meets his future wife at age five. Society would frown upon, not only the truth that he time travels, but the fact an older man is hanging out with such a little girl.

Claire, Henry's future wife, has a skewed first impression of him as when he time travels, nothing can be taken along, not even clothes. The emotions connected with the visits get applied to his future wife as well. The skill of distinguishing what is happening now is a chore.

As Henry's life in the present time continues moving along, memories of his past flood his mind; Meeting Claire is a meadow away from concerning eyes, adventures taken together at different points in each person's life. All these experiences drive both people to discover an explanation. Because Henry is constantly reliving in the past, the emotional impact grows more and more, causing more turmoil and thus causing him to time travel more.

The past often causes a person to want to forget the actions but it is only when the past events are fully understood that healing can begin. It is not a person will do that matters, it is the marks the person has left behind that will be remembered.

Sample FFFF

Set in the first quarter of the 20th century, William Faulkner's The Sound and the fury caricatures the rise and fall of the Old South in the allegorical decline of the Compson family. The oldest son and heir of the Compson's now destitute fortune is personified as the South's resistance to modernize, to rejoin the world after the formerly glamorized way of life was set in a waning morbidity in 1865. Quentin Compson's obsession with the past, most deftly exemplified in the incessant presence of clocks, and Faulkner's employment of key symbols composes a clear and poignant portrait of a nation's refusal to reforge its life.

Clocks, or "mausoleums of all human hope and desire," are the subject of Quentin's hate and perpetual speculation. He begins June 10, the day he commits suicide, by breaking his grandfather's antiquated watch, in an attempt to destroy the heirloom whose ticking is forever reminding him that as

each day passes, the Compson family grave grows less shallow. Clocks are brought on as a dual motif of fearing the future and regressing to the past, as Quentin breaks the watch in an effort to halt the advance of his family's doom, and, as he seeks to fix it or sees another clock, consistently reverts to playing out past events in his mind. He sees his sister, and her "loss of purity", converses with his father, watches the progress of his old life in the South. Attending Harvard in Cambridge, he wishes nothing more than to continue living in Jefferson. As his broken watch continues to tick, reminding of the immutable and destructive advance of time, Quentin's refusal to make any effort to accommodate his sister's loss of virginity or the Compson's loss in societal stature comes to represent the South's stubborn refusal to rejoin the union if not politically, socially. Clocks tick the South's past grandeur away into the recesses of dusty memory as they do the Compson's recollection of one of Mississippi's societally venerated families.

Shadows augment the process of time, yet more explicitly do they prove Quentin's obsession with the past. As he walks down the road, "tramping my shadow into the dust", Quentin cannot escape his shadow—just as he cannot escape the past. Its memory and intangibility haunts, dogs his every waking moment, from when he wakes to see "the shadow of the sash" or returns at last to the shadowy depths of the river. As Quentin is the South, the past haunts the South—Southerners cannot and will not forget their pre-Civil War glory.

The prevalence of gray as a symbol serve more to connect Quentin to the South. Quentin wears a gray suit, and Faulkner consistently (describes) him as going gray. Gray is Quentin, gray is the Confederate soldier's uniform, gray is the South. What makes this color symbolism even more relevant than the traditional associations of the color to the region below Mason-Dixon is the limbo it represents—neither light nor dark. The novel's original title, Twilight, is congruous with the notion of the South's life at an end but its death yet to come.

But death does come. Quentin's inability to cope with the past and adjust to the future leads him to despair. He throws himself into the river with two six-pound flatirons, drowning himself. Quentin's suicide is largely significant in the context of his personification of the South; Faulkner issues a distinct warning that if the South cannot acknowledge the end of its past, if the land he loves cannot regain the world, then it will die, and be forgotten, just as the deep waters of the river sucked Quentin from all human memory. Yet it was a warning the South could not remember.

Sample U

The mistakes Willy Loman had made in the past effected every aspect of his life up until his inevitable demise. In "Death of a Salesman" the head of a family makes a mistake that alters the path of his, and his families life for good. The failed pursuit of the American Dream, his descent into madness, and the seperation of his family are all due to Willy's faults. Without this climactic fault the play wouldn't have the same effect or demonstrate the statement about people that it makes at all.

The whole play you can see the Lowman families pursuit of the American Dream, how close they were, and how far away they got. In Willys mind they had achieved the dream, but he was only deceiving himself. He thought he had two perfect sons, but he was really encouraging behavior that would be destructive later in life. He had a wonderful wife, but cheated on her because he was lonely and had to feel liked. The biggest deception was that he was a great salesmen who could provide for his family, neither of those things were true. Willy's American Dream was almost all a fraud that he ripped apart when Biff found out he cheated on his mother.

Willy's descent to madness can all be traced back to the night Biff walked in on him with another woman. Biff saw through Willys act and never forgave him for it. This destroyed Willys dream and started off his insanity. Ever since, when Willy gets stressed a flashback is triggered and he can watch his dream unravel. If it werent for that one fatal flaw his lie may have been different. Willy's insanity eventually lead to his suicide, which ironically paid off the Lowman's house, contributing to his dream.

Willy never got to really confront his mistake and that ate away at him. He was living in an illusion he created. His past defined the rest of his life and ruined any chance he had. Willy was completely at fault for his downfall and his tradgedy.

Sample G

In Barbara Kingsolver's dramatic novel, The Poisonwood Bible, a family of six—complete with four impressionable daughters, a past father, and housewife—are hurled into the deep Congo from the safe abode in the United States. Following an extended missionary stay in Kilanga, Congo, the majority of the family leaves to various locations across the world as better people. However, one character, Reverend Nathan Price, never leaves Kilanga. This is a result of his inability to leave the past, thus leading to a tragic downward spiral in his values and attitude.

As the reader delves into the story, he/she may believe Nathan to be the rock of the Price family, as was usually the case of many families in the 1950s. The father, as the head of the household, was the sound mind, teaching his children values of love and honesty. However, as the reader continues to read, he/she discovers a hidden secret of Nathan's. As a young man, he went overseas to serve his country at war. He fought honorably and bravely, yet in one battle, he was mildly injured and was carried to a hospital. And in this battle, he was the only private to make it out alive; his cronies marched sadly to their deaths. As unfortunate as this was, Nathan never let it go, instead making it his life-goal to enlighten the world with his view on the word of God.

As pious and righteous as this may sound, Nathan's constant continuation of the past actually leads to his demise. His inability to change causes him—his values, his actions, his attitudes—to remain stagnant, even causing him to recede into darkness. First of all, his attitudes are backward from the beginning. His brush with death makes him think that he is superior to all others. Not once does he step off his pedestal. Thus, when entering the Congo, he immediately feels himself to be far above the people of Kilanga, let alone his all-female family. Thus, he refuses to listen to a single Kilangalese person for advice, resulting in the ruin of his garden and a lack of participation in his church. Furthermore, it is clear that he becomes stubborn as a result of his past, as evidenced by his refusal to listen to any advice. This is seen most clearly in his daily sermons. Every sermon he ends with the words, "Jesus is glorious." But in his stubborn ways, he refuses to learn that in Kilanga, his words actually translate to "Jesus is Poisonwood," which is in fact the most deadly and feared plant in Kilanga. As a result of his inability to learn from others and change his views, Nathan is forced to embarrass himself in every sermon. And thus, his dwelling on the past negatively affects his attitudes.

Finally, in contrasting characters' abilities to move on helps show that one cannot expect to go into another society changing others' views without changing himself or herself. Nathan waltzes into the jungle on his high horse, believing that he is the most righteous being in Africa. When in fact he is ironically the most ignorant character; and remains this way to his fiery death. On the other hand, in a further ironic twist, his daughters who he believes to be useless and naïve, turn out to have solid foundations. Instead of dwelling on the past in America, the daughters eventually learn from the people of Kilanga, resulting in a rapid maturation process. They ultimately leave Kilanga enlightened and virtuous, because they allowed change in their lives. Rachel ends up owning a successful hotel; Adah becomes a successful doctor; Leah marries and is a happy housewife; and although Ruth May dies prematurely, her young life is richer and fuller because she learned from the Kilangese. This juxtaposition of Nathan's dwelling on the past and the daughters welcoming of change shows that one must not dwell on the past.

All in all, Reverend Nathan Price let his past take control of his present and his future. Consequently, he did not allow himself to set a foundation for his family, and he could only value his own backward beliefs. Thus, the reader learns that pain is inevitable, but misery is a choice. We can dwell on the pain of our past, and let it control our present state of mind, or we can move on, and leave from others around us.

Sample V

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens is the story of a young boy who was the apprentice of a poor blacksmith. Through one act of kindness as young boy Pip's future was changed tremendously.

As a young child Pip was in a graveyard when he was found by a convict. Pip helps this convict by giving him food and providing him with a means of removing his shackles. Through the helping of this convict Pip has ensured himself a good future. If Pip had not helped this convict he would not have received his great expectations. However because he helped that convict, the convict was grateful and decides to make sure that he has a good future. The convict put every penny he earned into Pips future without Pip knowing until he reveals it.

In conclusion if Pip had not helped this convict then he would not have been caught again which means he would not have been sent to the Americas which means that he would not have been able to work to get the money for Pip.

Sample Q

In Alice Sebold's novel The Lovely Bones, the main character, Susie, is murdered at age 14. The police never find her body and are unable to solve her murder. This tragic chain of events tears her once so perfect family to pieces while she watches from her heaven, unable to tear herself away from the life she can no longer have.

Susie's family is deeply affected by their loss. No one more so than her father however. Susie was very close to her father and he finds himself unable to cope with her death. He becomes a dark, empty shell with only one purpose: to catch Susie's killer.

Her father, Jack, is so consumed by the past that he can no longer focus on the present. He is unaware that his wife drifts further away from him with each passing day. He can only see his precious, dead Susie when he looks at his other two, loving children. He is no longer able to focus at work; he ignores reality, and he merely retreats into his den and hides from his family. He becomes so obsessed with finding Susie's killer that he attacks one of her former friends in the cornfield one night. In short, he ceases to be a man and becomes a machine driven by grief.

Jack's actions are not all that is affected by his inability to let go of the past. His values and beliefs are affected as well. He no longer values life as he used to. Life becomes a chore rather than a blessing. He no longer believes in happiness and beauty but only in the horrors of the world. He begins to lose everything that ever had value to him and finds himself unable to make himself try to fix it. He has, in a sense, lost his will to survive.

Over the course of the novel Sebold uses greatly detailed description to convey this character's difficult journey back to happiness. And although, by the end of the novel, the character is finally content the hellish journey he endured sends a powerful message to the reader. In making Jack, the man of the house, so vulnerable and the most deeply transformed. Sebold succeeds in telling the reader that people can not always live up to expectations. One would expect a father to be strong for his family, not rip it apart. Also, Sebold sends an entirely different message by concluding the novel so happily. She sends the message that people can recover from their mistakes no matter how drastic the circumstances may be. Jack's journey to finding that he can in fact be himself without his daughter is essential to that message.